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ABSTRACT

Based on the assumption that newspapers mirror the conceptions of economic development among major groups in society and that analysis of their content may aid in the clarification of group viewpoints, two dimensions along which groups might differ with respect to their conceptions of economic development issues were postulated: the need for survival by members of the groups, and the modal cognitive structures and processes of members of the groups. Coverage by slum papers and coverage by elite papers in Greater Delhi, India, were then compared. Findings indicated that slum newspapers gave more attention to immediate relief for the extremely destitute, to economic questions affecting their survival, to a topic officially designated as urgent to their continued survival (family planning), and to small, local projects and concerns. The elite newspapers, on the other hand, gave more attention to preservation of existing institutions and to cosmopolitan issues and concerns. (Author/HOD)

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VARIATIONS BY AUDIENCE SOCIAL CLASS IN NEWSPAPER CONTENT RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT FOR NEWSPAPERS IN NEW DELHI, INDIA

by Kurt Kent

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VARIATIONS BY AUDIENCE SOCIAL CLASS IN NEWSPAPER CONTENT RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT FOR NEWSPAPERS IN NEW DELHI, INDIA

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Prepared for presentation at annual convention of the International Communication Association, Montreal, Canada, April 25-28, 1973.

Abstract: Delineation of differences in conception of economic development among major groups in society may aid in achieving the degree of consensus necessary for development to proceed in a democratic manner. Newspapers mirror these conceptions, and thus analysis of their content may aid in the clarification of group viewpoints.

Two dimensions along which groups might differ with respect to their conceptions of economic development issues were postulated. These were the need for survival by members of the groups, and the modal cognitive structures and processes of members of the groups. Several predictions of relative emphasis in newspaper coverage of development subject matters were made on the basis of these two cultural dimensions.

Coverage by slum and elite papers in Greater Delhi, India, was compared. The hypotheses relating to the dimensions were generally upheld. Slum newspapers gave more attention to immediate relief for the extremely destitute, to economic questions affecting their survival (such as inflation, rent control, and taxes), to a topic officially designated as urgent to their continued survival (family planning), and to small, local projects and concerns.

Elite newspapers gave more attention to preservation of existing institutions and to cosmopolitan issues and concerns.

The first of the two dimensions seemed primary. That is, the survival potential of a topic seemed more important to its relative emphasis than the scale of the project or issue, or other aspects of modal cognitive structure and process.

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INTRODUCTION

If economic development is to proceed in a democratic manner, consent of all sectors of the populace is necessary.[1] Different sectors will, however, have different views of development. These views may differ not only as regards the final goals of the development process, but also in the kinds of emphases and priorities given to different aspects of that process. If such differences are found to exist in a given community and their nature is carefully delineated, achievement of the necessary degree of consensus may be facilitated.

This paper represents a first step, a drawing out of some of the differences between two major groups in the metropolitan area of Greater Delhi, India. The two groups are the slum dwellers and the elite.[2] The method of determining the views of these groups concerning development is content analysis of the newspapers circulating most widely among them.

It has long been held that the content of the mass media mirrors their audiences.[3] A conservative newspaper, for example, will generally be found to have a conservative audience, and a liberal newspaper a liberal audience (at least so long as there exists, as in Delhi, strong competition among newspapers). While the question of causality is not completely settled by any means, it does seem likely that it is much easier for the medium to change than the audience. If this is so, the content

of the mass media can be viewed as important indicators of prevailing values and attitudes of the media audiences. This is indeed the assumption underlying much of journalistic content analysis, and forms the basis for the use of the technique here.

It is not held that there are no differences among the various newspapers circulating within each of the two groups under analysis here. Indeed, within-group differences were found among the newspapers analyzed in this study (although they will not be examined here).[4] It is expected, however, that there will be certain broad similarities across the newspapers of the two groups. This finding also has support from previous study.[5]

Neither is it expected that the mirror between newspaper and audience is of fine, high quality, reflecting with no distortion. Evidence is available that indicates that such a view would be mistaken.[6] All that is contended here is that sufficient similarities exist to make the assumption a useful one, despite bubbles and waves in the glass and patches where the silvering is missing.

Two types of needs on the part of individuals have been postulated as central to the images of development which will emerge from the analysis of newspaper content. These are the need for survival, and the need for cognitive consistency. Following the theorizing of Goodenough, an anthropologist centrally concerned with development, it is held that both of these needs are met in part through the customs of social groups.[7] Customs are defined as established modes of action and belief.[8]

They "are not developed to meet the needs of society, but to meet the felt needs of individuals."[9]

Survival is one of the most basic of all needs, but even it may become secondary. This is possible when the involvement of the survival need is not evident to the individual actor, or when a more highly valued need intervenes.[10] It is assumed here that survival is a more highly valued need for most individuals at most times under most situations in the two groups under study, but that there are many situations in which the relation of individual elements of culture are apparently so distant from survival considerations that they are not brought into play in a degree sufficiently strong enough to affect mass communication behavior.

In such situations, for questions of development where other strongly felt individual needs are not primary, cognitive consistency becomes an important consideration for individual actors. Situations relating to development must be woven into the web of culture, and considerable intra-societal variations can be expected in the process of construction of a new cognitive structure.[11] These intra-societal variations will be revealed in the content of the mass media most commonly utilized by the various social groups.

HYPOTHESES

From the above theoretical structure a number of hypotheses concerning the differences between the newspapers of the slum dwellers and of the elite of Delhi have been postulated. These hypotheses all relate to cultural manifestations of two individual needs: the need for survival and the need for cognitive consistency.

First, slum dwellers will be more concerned than members of the elite about the following types of subjects:

(a) Income and price level (inflation) -- because these subjects are more central to the continued survival of the slum dwellers.

(b) Immediate relief for the extremely destitute -- because these subjects are urgently important for a significant portion of the urban slum dwellers, while never of a similar magnitude for members of the elite.

(c) Topics which are officially designated as urgent to the continued survival of the slum dwellers -- bodies making such designations are in large part composed of members of the elite, who thus disregard the topics personally.

(d) Small, limited, local projects -- these are more congruent with the cognitive structures and processes of the slum dwellers than the elite, as the slum dwellers have few opportunities for realistic exercise of cognitive modes which characterize projects of an opposite nature.[12]

On the other hand, members of the elite will be more concerned than slum dwellers with the following:

(a) Preservation in the main of the existing societal institutions -- since they are supporting the elite. This would be expected to be especially visible with regard to institutions in which the elite have almost complete control, as opposed to those in which control is more widely shared.

(b) Large, cosmopolitan, extra-local concerns -- such concerns are more congruent with the cognitive structures and processes of members of the elite.

These hypotheses will be evaluated with regard to a number of specific types of development subject matters.

METHOD

A content analysis of seven daily newspapers of Greater Delhi, India, was carried out in 1967. (See Table 1 for a list of the newspapers with language of publication and percentage of slum readers.) Definitions were made of the types of

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Table 1 goes about here

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development news to be coded in the newspaper content. Two pre-tests of the category scheme were carried out. Measures of

TABLE 1

READERSHIP OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS BY SLUM DWELLERS
OF NEW DELHI, INDIA, WHO READ NEWSPAPERS REGULARLY

Newspaper	Language	Readership
		(Percent of respondents)
Slum newspapers		
NavBharat Times	Hindi	38
Hindustan	Hindi	29
Pratap	Urdu	10
Milap	Urdu	10
Hindustan Times	English	8
Miscellaneous	- - -	6
Subtotal		101[a]
Elite newspapers		
Times of India	English	b
Statesman	English	0
Subtotal		b
Total		100
		(N=208)

a. Total is greater than 100 percent due to rounding.
b. Less than one-half of one percent.

coding reliability were computed during these pre-tests, and during the final coding also, to aid in improving category definition and to provide a means for evaluating the reliability of the final results. The level of coding reliability was judged acceptable for all categories reported here.

The basic unit for the content analysis was the item, e.g., the news story, editorial, letter to the editor. Each development subject matter was coded as present or absent for each item. Then the percentage of all items which contained each category of development news was computed for each type of newspaper, slum and elite. These percentages form the basis for the slum-elite comparisons. See Appendix A for detailed figures.

SAMPLE

The sample of newspapers comprised all issues of seven Delhi newspapers published during the week of December 18-24, 1966. As seen in Table 1, the five slum newspapers were those with the highest readership in a survey of slum dwellers executed in late 1966.[13] Neither of the two elite newspapers had as much as one-half of one percent readership in the slums, but both were nominated as the prestige papers of the metropolis by business and government leaders in Delhi.[14] These two newspapers also registered the greatest gain in readership from persons with less than a University degree to those with a University

degree or more education in a readership survey of the general public in Delhi during the first part of 1966.[15]

The time period was chosen because this was the only period when it was possible to obtain copies of all the newspapers. It was necessary to buy many of the slum newspapers on the day of publication, and only the limited time period indicated was available for such purchases. These slum newspapers did not have files of back issues for sale.

FINDINGS

Hypotheses were generally supported, although results could not be clearly interpreted for some categories which seemed to reflect both of the opposing ends of the survival continuum.

More attention was given in slum papers than elite papers to prices and inflation, rent control, taxes, and welfare payments. These findings are considered reflections of the greater centrality of such subjects for the continued survival of slum dwellers than of members of the elite. The latter can often escape taxes and minimize the effects of inflation, while having no need for rent control or welfare payments.

Two categories which it was thought would also fall under the same heading were demands for higher wages and for higher pensions. Greater attention was given these subjects by elite

than slum newspapers, however. This may be an indication that the level of wages and pensions is crucial to the continued survival of the elite, as they may affect the amount of profit members of the elite can realize more than the earlier types of subjects.

As expected, slum papers gave much more attention than elite papers to famine relief and distribution of clothes for the destitute. These two categories reflect the immediate survival needs of slum dwellers, while having a much more distant relationship to needs of the elite.

Slum papers also gave more coverage, on a percentage basis, to family planning. This is one of the types of topics officially designated as urgent to the continued survival of the slum dwellers. While undoubtedly having much importance for the elite also, major governmental attention in this program was focused on members of the lower classes, who form the overwhelming majority of the population. In addition, since the family planning policy was established by members of the elite, it might be expected that they would be less concerned with its immediate daily implications than those toward whom the policy was directed. Another reason for the expectation of greater slum coverage might be that it is in the objective interests of slum dwellers to have families as small as possible. This argument overlooks, however, the social security function of large families in societies such as India. While smaller families may be in the long-term interests of the slum dwellers, there are also significant short-term disadvantages.

Also given more coverage in the slum newspapers were government housing projects and local commercial activities. These are the type of small local projects which are congruent with the cognitive structure and processes of slum dwellers. Such persons may also be led to take this orientation by the pressing need for immediate change in their environments.

Elite newspapers gave more attention than slum papers to private banks, as would be expected under our hypothesis. Such banks are controlled by members of the elite, and are crucial to their position. This is illustrated by the furor over their proposed nationalization.

More elite coverage was also given to a number of large, cosmopolitan, extra-local projects and activities. Slum coverage was dominant, however, for a number of these projects or concerns, contrary to expectations.

Among the subjects given greater elite coverage were major physical projects in transportation and education, land reform, and exports. Slum papers, on the other hand, gave more attention to village development, foreign aid, and trade agreements.

The slum papers' relatively extensive consideration of village development may reflect the recent migration to Delhi slums of much of their population. If this were true, however, slum papers might have been expected to give more coverage to land reform, too. Perhaps the explanation lies in the land reform program constituting a threat to the position of the elite, while the village development programs would not be such a threat.

Foreign aid and trade agreements were concerned in large part with imports of food grains for use in famine relief, thus explaining the greater slum concentration on these topics.

DISCUSSION

Two dimensions along which groups might differ with respect to their conceptions of economic development issues were postulated. These were the need for survival by members of the groups, and the modal cognitive structure and processes of members of the groups. Several predictions of relative emphasis in newspaper coverage of development subject matters were made on the basis of these two dimensions.

Coverage by slum and elite papers in Greater Delhi, India, was compared. The hypotheses relating to the dimensions were generally upheld. Slum newspapers gave more attention to immediate relief for the extremely destitute, to economic questions affecting their survival (such as inflation, rent control, and taxes), to a topic officially designated as urgent to their continued survival (family planning), and to small, local projects and concerns.

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The first of the two dimensions seemed primary. That is, the survival potential of a topic seemed more important to its relative emphasis than the scale of the project or issue, or other aspects of modal cognitive structure and process.

Content analysis of newspapers seems promising for indicating class differences in conceptions of development. The findings here have implications for governmental communications policies, though hopefully not in the direction of promotion of the "false consciousness" of which Mann found indications in two advanced industrial societies.[16] Rather it would be hoped that an appreciation of the factors underlying class differences in development coverage might lead to improved efforts on the part of both private and governmental communication organizations. In this way could lie broader support for efforts at directed social change.

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1. This is, of course, a highly oversimplified statement. But it contains sufficient truth to be useful, I feel. At least the passive consent of the governed is necessary for democratic processes to operate, in the sense that violent dissent leads to the breakdown of those processes. Agreement is not necessary, but consent is. For an analysis of the role of group differences in development see David Apter, The Politics of Modernization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965; paper, 1967).

2. A discussion of the place of the elite in Indian development may be found in S.C. Dube, "Communication, Innovation, and Planned Change in India," pp. 129-168 of Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm (eds.), Communication and Change in the Developing Countries (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967). Results of a study of some Delhi slum dwellers may be found in Robert E. Simmons, Kurt Kent, and Vishwa M. Mishra, "Media and Developmental News in Slums of Ecuador and India," Journalism Quarterly, 45:4 (Winter 1968), pp. 698-705; Vishwa M. Mishra, "Mass Media Use Patterns in the Indian Slums: A Study of Four Basties in Greater Delhi," Gazette, 16:1 (1970), pp. 27-38; and Vishwa M. Mishra, "Mass Media Use and Modernization in Greater Delhi Basties," Journalism Quarterly, 47:2 (Summer 1970), pp. 331-339.

3. See, for example, Richard W. Budd, Robert K. Thorp and Lewis Donohew, Content Analysis of Communications (New York: Macmillan, 1967), especially Chapter 2.

4. Some gross differences for the papers analyzed in the present study may be noted in Simmons, Kent, and Mishra, "Media and Developmental News in Slums of Ecuador and India," loc. cit. Substantial differences were found among editorials in a different group of elite papers, the British prestige papers analyzed in J. Zvi Namenwirth, "Prestige Newspapers and the Assessment of Elite Opinions," Journalism Quarterly, 47:2 (Summer 1970), pp. 318-323.

5. J. Zvi Namenwirth, "Marks of Distinction: An Analysis of British Mass and Prestige Newspaper Editorials," American Journal of Sociology, 74:4 (January 1969), pp. 343-360.

6. Robert N. Pierce, "Public Opinion and Press Opinion in Four Latin American Cities," Journalism Quarterly, 46:1 (Spring 1969), pp. 53-60. This study was confined to editorials, and therefore may not form an adequate indicator of the degree of similarity between press and audience in the matter of wider orientations to reality, such as are assessed in the present paper, as opposed to current opinions on political topics. Pierce found better press-audience congruence for elite than mass newspapers.

7. Ward H. Goodenough, Cooperation in Change (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1963), pp. 63-74. For comments on the role of class in innovation, especially in regard to survival value of the status quo for the elite, see H.G. Barnett, Innovation: The Basis of Cultural Change (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), pp. 403-407, passim. Evidence of class differences in cultural phenomena abounds. On general value orientations in the United States, see Milton Rokeach and Seymour Parker, "Values as Social Indicators of Poverty and Race Relations in America," Annals, 388 (March 1970), pp. 97-111. "The findings reported here lend support to the idea that considerable value differences do distinguish the rich from the poor, but not Negroes from whites," the authors report. On family relationships and other variables, see Melvin L. Kohn, Class and Conformity: A Study in Values (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1969). Kohn writes (p. 80), "The lower men's social class positions . . . the more resistant they are to innovation and social change." This held for both the United States and Italy. Michael Mann, in "The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy," American Sociological Review, 35:3 (June 1970), pp. 423-439, found a wide variety of class differences in his re-analysis of survey data for the United States and England. (He also found greater value consensus among the middle class than the lower class; this may partially explain the Pierce finding on elite papers presented in note 6 above. This difference in degree of consensus will not be considered further here, however.)

8. Goodenough, op. cit., p. 63.

9. Ibid., p. 74.

10. Ibid., pp. 72-74.

11. Ibid., pp. 68-69.

12. This tendency toward concreteness in the communication behavior of members of the lower class has been noted by others. See Leonard Schatzman and Anselm Strauss, "Social Class and Modes of Communication," pp. 422-456 of Alfred G. Smith (ed.), Communication and Culture: Readings in the Codes of Human Interaction (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), especially p. 455; and Namenwirth, "Marks of Distinction ... ," loc. cit.

13. Simmons, Kent. and Mishra, "Media and Developmental News in Slums of Ecuador and India," loc. cit.

14. These interviews were conducted by Vishwa Mishra and by Prof. Raymond B. Nixon of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

15. "A Depth Readership Study in the Four Metropolitan Cities," special number of Monthly Public Opinion Surveys of the Indian Institute of Public Opinion, 11:9, 10 (June, July, 1966), 66 pp. See "Section IV: Readership Preferences -- Delhi," pp. 11-12. Other sources in which the two newspapers chosen are referred to as elite or prestige papers include K.E. Eapen, "Daily Newspapers in India: Their Status and Problems," Journalism Quarterly, 44:3 (Autumn 1967), pp. 520-532; and "UNCTAD-II: A Challenge for the Reporter," Vidura: Bulletin of the Press Institute of India, 5:2 (May 1968), pp. 1-5.

16. Mann, "The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy," loc. cit.

APPENDIX A

PERCENTAGE OF ITEMS
CONTAINING SPECIFIC SUBJECT MATTERS

Subject matter	Slum papers	Elite papers
	(% of items)	(% of items)
Commercial expansion	1.2	- -[a]
Prices and inflation	1.9	0.7
Village development	0.8	0.1
Famine relief	4.2	3.6
Foreign aid	2.1	1.9
Family planning	0.6	0.4
Rent control	0.1	- -[a]
Taxes	0.8	0.7
Slum housing	0.4	0.3
Distribution of clothes to destitute	0.3	0.2
Welfare payments	0.2	0.2[b]
Trade agreements	0.2	0.2[b]
Exports	0.5	0.5[b]
Pension demands	- -[a]	0.1
Financial institutions	0.2	0.3
Land reform	0.1	0.3
Educational physical projects	1.0	1.2
Wage demands	1.3	1.6
Transportation physical projects	1.5	1.8
	(N=4,191)	(N=2,035)

a. No items
b. Difference concealed by rounding